

The Labour Organiser

No. 194

AUGUST, 1937

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THE LABOUR PARTY AT WORK

The Press and Publicity Department of the Labour Party are to be congratulated on their first issue of the "Literature Secretaries' Bulletin." This sheet is certainly full of inspiration, and from it we gather the following facts:—

Since April 1st, 275 new Literature Secretaries have been appointed, and there are now over 400.

Head Office asked a number of representative local groups to undertake an experiment in door-to-door sales, using a leaflet supplied free. The idea was to organise a small group of comrades under the Literature Secretary; select a few streets; deliver the leaflet one evening and call with "Labour's Immediate Programme" the next. In all cases, an excellent result is reported.

St. Albans Local Party.—Mr. P. A. Jones reports a very detailed experiment, with various types of street, from houses at £2,000 each to Council houses at 9s. per week. Surprising results were obtained in streets where no apparent voting support existed. *Altogether 413 houses were visited; at 70 the residents were out; 165 pamphlets were sold.* Eight comrades did the job between them and enrolled eight new members in the course of their calls.

Reading D.L.P.—Mr. Claude Denscombe sends details of the sales made in five different areas of the town. Even in the most "difficult" streets a 25 per cent. result was obtained. *312 houses*

were visited; 51 residents were out; 99 pamphlets were sold.

Mr. Denscombe says: "We feel this kind of canvass and sale of literature is well worth while. The sales could have been very much larger if we had confined our activities to Labour strongholds; but we experimented with various types of housing. We intend to go on with the work."

South Hammersmith D.L.P.—Grove Ward, report that *65 pamphlets were sold in a call at 243 houses.* Further experiments confirm an average sale of 1 in 4.

Southgate League of Youth.—Mr. Lewis Hills, chairman, gives details of several different areas tackled in this True-Blue Division of North London. *League members called at 508 houses and sold 125 pamphlets.* Allowance must be made for a number of people out.

Southgate comrades are carrying on with the good work, and in addition are reporting personally to all Wards in the Party, and getting the scheme adopted as part of Party work.

Edmonton D.L.P.—Mr. H. B. Johnson, Literature Secretary, planned a systematic campaign, delivering leaflets to 100 houses each week-end and calling with pamphlets. In the first weeks, tackling the opposition stronghold, *they sold 66 pamphlets and made 19 new members.*

Two more Wards in Edmonton have taken up the scheme and ordered their first supply of leaflets and pamphlets.



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Leeds have tackled the Literature Drive thoroughly, and supplies are organised through the City Party. Wards are co-operating with the door-to-door sales, and two reports have come in:—

Kirkstall Ward.—Mr. A. W. Hatch, Literature Secretary, reports: The first evening out, we called on 200 houses and sold 58 pamphlets. The following week, we took out the amplifier and held 6 street meetings and sold 88 copies. The next week a more difficult area was tried, and 59 copies were sold. *The total so far is 247 copies of the Programme.*

Hyde Park Ward.—Mr. G. Briggs sends a report which shows 200 copies sold for distribution of 800 leaflets, and in addition they sold 6 dozen copies of their local paper and made many valuable contacts.

Leeds City Party have disposed of over 5,000 copies of "Labour's Immediate Programme."

Wansbeck Division (Northumberland).—Mr. Dan Dawson, the energetic Party Agent for this Division, reports the sale of 1,450 copies of the "Immediate Programme" in 15 events.

Scunthorpe (Brigg D.L.P.).—Mr. F. Brumby, the young and energetic Literature Secretary for Scunthorpe, reports a street sales effort on Friday, July 2nd. Twelve comrades stationed themselves along the High Street with copies of the Programme, and sold 340 copies on the one evening.

On the Saturday night six of them went along to an Agricultural Workers' Demonstration at Brigg, and sold another 320.

ADDITIONAL CANDIDATES ENDORSED BY N.E.C.

July 28th, 1937

ALTRINCHAM: C. F. C. Donnelly, "Donrene," Park Road North, Chester-le-Street.

EAST DORSET: H. Ross Williamson, 25, Craven Street, W.C.2.

HARBOROUGH: A. E. Bennett, 4, Broad Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.

LEWISHAM EAST: W. L. Kendall, 159, Chiswick Village, W.4.

LEWISHAM WEST: A. M. Skeffington, "Erewhon," 64, Norbury Hill, S.W.16.

KING'S LYNN: Major F. J. Wise, Cropredy Lawn Farm, Cropredy, Banbury, Oxon.

MITCHAM: T. Braddock, 21, Carlton Road, Putney, S.W.14.

SALISBURY: E. J. Plaisted, 132, Kenmare Road, Knowles West, Bristol, 4.

RUTHERGLEN: T. Scollan, 9, Barlogan Avenue, Glasgow, S.W.2.

DUMFRIESSHIRE: T. Steele, Station House, Carronbridge, Dumfries.

BRIGHTON: Ian Cater, 15, Heathcote Street, W.C.1.

WITHDRAWALS.

THORNBURY: Capt. J. E. Sears.

STREATHAM: A. Skeffington.

TWICKENHAM: D. Wilson Temple.

HIGH PEAK: R. W. Wright.

TO OUR READERS

Following our usual custom and the expressed desires of our readers, we have again devoted our August issue largely to suitable reprints from past numbers. We trust our readers will appreciate our selection and also the other unusual fare provided.

Mr. Arthur Woodburn, Scottish Secretary of the Labour Party, writes in "The Plebs" for August on "Socialism and the Labour Party—the Dead Weight of the Pessimists." The title does not precisely convey the worth and scope of the article. We have read it as a very able rebutment of Communist attacks and a defence of Labour's attitude to Communist methods. Some of the matter in the article is worth reproduction in leaflet form.

? INTERROGATION NOTES ?

? ON PROPAGANDA ?

Having studied Labour propaganda of all kinds very closely, says "Investigator" in "The Labour Bulletin," I have come to the view that its real weakness is not so much in the technical matter of lay-out and design, or, in speeches, lack of skill in presentation, but the failure to strike the appropriate note.

We are still dominated too much by the soap-box outlook. We have got behind us all the people that we can get by the fiercely critical, highly emotional "I'm a rebel and proud of it" type of appeal. We now have to bring over some millions of people who obviously remain quite unmoved by that sort of thing. They are the people who have, as yet, little social consciousness, nor are they instinctively opposed to things as they are. They resist the influence of Labour propaganda as it is commonly sustained, or are openly irritated by it.

* * *

Much of our present propaganda is either prepared to suit the existing supporter, or for the person with some degree of political interest. Study the average Labour speech, and you find that it is rarely designed to impress the non-politically minded mass. In language, theme and general presentation, it is produced to satisfy opinion within the Party, and get the cheers of supporters who like listening to a "fighter."

If you say that this is because meetings are for the most part attended by supporters, my answer is that this is only further evidence of the same fault. How much of our meetings publicity is designed to pull in the unpersuaded?

Election addresses, leaflets, local news-sheets, and pamphlets, with few exceptions, are all produced on the assumption that the potential reader shares the political interest of the writer.

A large number of local news-sheets are turned out by Divisional Parties. I

see most of them and consider that few have any chance of being read outside Party circles, in spite of big circulations. Apart from unattractive make-up and text, they devote most space to matters of purely domestic interest to members. And frequently with surprising tactlessness.

* * *

In the preparation of all our publicity, whether it be speeches or written matter, we must first ask ourselves: "What is this aiming at?" If its purpose is to convert (and most of it now should have no other purpose) then it should be carefully designed to do that and nothing else, even if the Party member who sees or hears it complains that he had heard it all before.

It is no good going on merely tickling the fancy of those who are with us. It is the unmoved mass outside which matters. And if they are to be moved, we need to find a constructive line of approach which is attuned to their attitude of mind.

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TO

"C." c/o The Editor.

HINLEY ATKINSON on

THE PROS AND CONS OF ORGANISATION

Is organisation within the Labour Party a constructive factor of decisive importance in our fight for power? Or is it merely a necessary disciplinary exercise designed to prevent muddle and confusion? says Hinley Atkinson in this month's "London News."

It is important, he continues, that every Party officer and worker should be convinced of the first view. Why?

All Parties' activities are based on ideas: organisation is a *creative* force which develops and extends ideas, giving them practical shape and active operation.

We must, therefore, emphasise the necessity of organisation and win acknowledgment of it as a primary function, the principles of which should be applied to all our problems, whether it be the conduct of Party business, propaganda, a membership campaign, or the general relationship of all these things to each other.

Once the value of this creative factor in organisation is realised, inefficiency will no longer be tolerated; time-worn practices will be continued only if they "deliver the goods"; initiative and service will be welcomed as the highest and most respected qualities of Party membership, and office will be allocated according to capacity.

Opposition to organisation is often based on the belief that it is some cut-and-dried plan, advanced merely because it has been successful elsewhere, perhaps in entirely different circumstances. This conception is the direct opposite of the truth.

Organisation, of necessity, takes full account of things as they are and acts accordingly—with the object of achieving something which has been decided upon by the intelligent use of all the mental and physical factors which can be mobilised.

The act of deciding what can be achieved is in itself an essential part of organisation, because such a decision, to be of value, entails consideration of the difficulties which exist, and how far they can be overcome with the resources available, and of how best to use these resources. And we must not

forget that initiative, experience, method, courage, judgment, and enthusiasm are more valuable resources than a balance at the bank.

In approaching the organisation of the Party and its work, the first step is resolutely to determine that a *laissez-faire* attitude shall not be tolerated. Every Party has its "dismal Jimmies" who—often unwittingly—sabotage constructive effort by expounding the philosophy of Failure, past, present, and future; they must be "sat upon." Then there are the willing and often very active workers who are so impatient to get on with the job that they leave out of account many of the factors which will determine the fruitfulness of their efforts; such members should be kindly led to realise that organisation is their best ally—not a difficult job provided a plan is produced.

Having won the Party to a positive acceptance of organisation, continuous and constructive work must be undertaken. A programme is essential, and a well-thought-out programme will, of course, be balanced according to the strength of the Party and the needs of the constituency.

A good principle to work on is "first things first." For example, a Party which has not organised its structure in accordance with the appropriate Model Rules, the operation of which is excellent organisation, cannot co-ordinate its activities; another, weak in membership, will find it necessary to increase its strength as the first step in development; whilst a strong membership Party will concentrate on extending its propaganda and perfecting its electoral machinery. Some Parties would treble their activities merely by adopting businesslike procedure at their meetings; this is a matter for rigid discipline.

Whatever our programme, let us make it ambitious within the planned capacity of our Party. Think it out. A job carried through is better than three embarked upon without planning and, as often happens, never carried through.

An Introduction

The Labour Party Literature Drive

OUR IMMEDIATE AIM

AT the beginning of 1937, the National Executive decided that, in view of the many new publications to be issued in connection with Labour's Immediate Programme, a special drive should be made to obtain the widest possible use of pamphlets, leaflets and posters.

The first step was the appointment of a Literature Circulation Officer to co-ordinate Head Office efforts with those of the Constituencies, and the second step is to obtain the appointment of Literature Secretaries in every division, and in each Local Party in County Divisions.

The wider distribution of Party Literature, following the appointment of nearly 350 new Literature Secretaries since April 1st, proves without doubt that there is need for specialising in the work among local groups.

It should be recognised that the Divisional Literature Secretary is second only in importance to the Party Chairman and Secretary. His special task is to plan the use of literature to reach those who are not influenced by public meetings, and in the average division that means *over 75 per cent. of the electors.*

Head Office asks for the appointment in every Party of a comrade who is prepared to make literature his or her special concern, and who will be prepared to devise local plans for leaflets, posters and pamphlets which will dovetail with National propaganda and literature campaigns.

Surprising results are being obtained with sales of pamphlets, by the new Secretaries, acting on suggestions sent to each of them by Head Office as soon as they are appointed. The methods include street sales, door-to-door methods, at public and party meetings, on a canvass, and through Trade Union Branch meetings.

As the Editor of the "Labour Organiser" has kindly placed a page at our disposal each month to deal with literature, we shall be detailing various methods used and found successful, in getting over pamphlets and other literature.

The first essential is the appointment of literature secretaries in every Divisional and local Party, and we hope readers of this journal will make sure this has been done or will be done, at their next Party meeting. When Head Office is advised of the comrade selected, a free sample set of pamphlets is dispatched and an opportunity given to order an initial supply on sale or return.

Lack of local funds is, therefore, no excuse for lack of Party Literature at Public and Party meetings.

People are interested in reading about party policy. Give them the chance to do so.

MAURICE HACKETT,
Literature Circulation Officer.

HOLIDAY READING

MY HISTORY BOOK

The following poem occurs in an unpublished story by the Editor, entitled "A Pagan's Dream." The scene is set in a converted Cathedral on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the setting up of the New Social Order. A child recites these lines.

The world is old, the world is new,
A problem strange yet passing true;
For with "The Day" there came new life,
The old time died with ancient strife,
And Liberty—new found—unbound,
Sped through the land as at the sound
Of triumph made, all men made cheer
And issued forth to welcome her.

My hist'ry book tells of the way
Men moved to bring this better day.
It says for long men tried to find
The *Fount* of wrongs—the sense behind
The people's shame. What held them so
In bondage laid—in endless woe?
It tells how light, in time, was turned
Upon the source, and how men learned
The Fount was sprung in law, and creed,
In wage-slave State and fostered greed.

My hist'ry tells how man arose
And brought that era to a close.
It tells how, long before "The Day,"
Some Socialists had seen the way.
My book relates how few they were;
What straits they had; how much to dare.
It tells how men, in darkness held,
Spurned these few, as they rebelled:
How, striving on with banner bright,
Their triumphs came—"The Day" in sight!

My hist'ry differs in a way
From what was written for their day,
For while they read of wars and kings,
I read of men and noble things.
I turn to read, when wars were made,
Not of the war—the dead they laid—
I love to read of those brave few,
Who nobly stood with brighter view
Opposed to wars; and taught that men
Were brothers all, yea, even then!

HOLIDAY READING

I love again, when craving comes
 To know the past—to search the aeons—
 'Tis then I love the lowly part
 To seek, of mothers, in their heart
 The fire of love borne with their child
 In shelter'd home or forest wild.
 This treasured love of mothers borne—
 In adult age so scarred and torn—
 This treasured love, my history says,
 Preserved the light for brighter days.

The spark had been throughout all time
 Enkindling hopes for things sublime,
 But when the spark would rise to flame,
 False laws, false creeds, its spirit tame.
 Yet, came a day when spark took fire,
 New truths shone out, the flame lit higher;
 The banner men, those earnest few,
 Grew to many, as was their due,
 And one by one their chains fell from
 And banished visions they came home.

Then love of mothers grew in might,
 It conquered hatreds, shed its light.
 It spread from home to man and man,
 It still sped on, the seas to span.
 It held all nations in its sway,
 Achieved its triumph in "The Day."
 And man and love no longer be
 In bondage laid—they both are free!

* * *

For this tale then I always look
 Whene'er I read my history book.
 I see those few with banner bright,
 I would that *they* could see the light
 Of these glad days; 'twould cheer their hearts
 And strengthen them for strenuous parts.
 Yet stay—perhaps some few did look
 Forward—into my history book?

I wonder.

H. DRINKWATER, 1917.



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HOLIDAY READING**AN ANTICIPATION****YEAR 100. NEW SOCIAL ORDER**

This is another from a number of songs, poems and speeches in similar setting. The theme is contentious.

The Christian Church in days gone by,
Sang praises high of Charity.
Faith and Hope, they said, would die
If Reason taught Humanity;
And Charity they took for Love,
Appeasing thus their God above;
And Faith was necessary, too,
Or Christian truth had fallen through!
While Hope's eternal springs supplied
The better things men were denied.
Thus Priest and Ruler sitting high,
Used Faith and Hope and Charity,
That nations might in bondage lie
Content in their humility.

The Ages ran, there came a doubt.
It grew apace—the sands ran out.
And in the end the people woke,
Wearied indeed of age-long yoke.
When, casting round to ease their pains,
They saw the priests' and idlers' gains.
The scales fell off, the plot lay bare—
No worker reap'd his full day's share!

Each took counsel with his brother,
Sought the strength of one another.
And, Purpose made, they held it true
With pure great Ideal full in view.

Then Reason came on wings with Love,
And Justice raised her scales above,
And Charity to Love gave place
And hid herself with sham'd face.
And Faith fled off, 'fore Reason's frown,
Nor longer chained the people down,
While Hope (defrauding jade!) gave in
And stayed with man to perfect him!
Then bright and cloudless shone the sky
On Man's untrammelled destiny,
And Reason, Justice, Love did vie
To serve the future progeny.

H. DRINKWATER.

IN LIGHTER VEIN**THE AGENT'S DREAM**

INTRODUCTION

Way up on the crest of a silvery cloud
 The guardian angel sat
 The world at his feet, the heavens around
 His celestial Ararat.
 Thus watching one day his charges below,
 The angel cried aloud,
 For he saw a man with a looking-glass
 Among the madding crowd.
 "Stay, fool," said the angel, "hide thy mirror,
 Mankind does not forgive
 When thou turn'st the glass on thy fellow men
 To show them how they live."
 "Alas!" said the man with the looking-glass,
 "The mischief now is done,
 If thou advise from thy perch in the skies,
 Why not—ere I began?
 "I have turned the glass on my fellow men
 For other fellows' gain."
 "Good," said the angel, "I forgive thee once;
 Offend ye not again."

And that is why, my brothers,
 I bring this verse to light;
 For the angel has forgiven
 This scream I writ one night!

THE TALE BEGINS

When the agent started, his office was bare,
 What could he do with no furniture there?
 Like many another when matters go wrong
 He packed up his doings and off he went home.
 To sulk do you think? No, a wise man was this,
 He told the whole story—gave the Missus a kiss,
 While the going was good, he begged an old table,
 Some chairs, pots and pictures, and then cut his cable.

So now the office no longer is bare,
 But the cupboard is—stark and stare;
 Not a sou in the coffers—not a dime in the bank,
 Just the ghost of a Party existing by swank.
 It's the problem of war all over again,
 An urgent need for money and men
 And women; and the cry reaches heaven,
 "Please God, send this Party an Ernest Bevin."

THE AGENT SMILES

Now in that office so full of care,
Heaven has answered that earnest prayer.
Busy as bees on a warm summer day,
He has tackled the job in the only way.
The need he sees is a brand new Party
With a soul of its own, active and hearty,
So he searches for members the highways and hedges,
And fills up his time with membership pledges.

And the members come in one's and twos,
One tells another the gladsome news—
One more ever—one more ever to join.

Some were women and some were men,
Some dropped out but joined again—
One more ever—

They came in rags, and they came in bags,
Some with pipes and some with fags—
One more ever—

They came in boots and plus-four suits,
Great big brutes and their little off-shoots.
One more ever—

They came by bus and they came on foot,
And down on the counter their pennies put—
One more ever—

They came in cars and thanked their stars
Labour imposed no stupid bars—
One more ever—

Big men came, all fat and feet,
Signed the form and took their seat,
One more ever—

Little men came full of conceit,
Tip-toed to the table and got their receipt—
One more ever—

Maidens came with a smile so sweet
As to sweep our agent off his feet.
One more ever—

Old maids came with a mien stiff and proper,
Liberties here would fetch him a cropper—
One more ever—

Tories came and gazed in amazement
 At the queue that queued on the greasy pavement.
 One more ever—

The Sergeant came and brought a policeman,
 Both joined up and so it pleased 'em.
 One more ever—

The rush came on and the crowd grew bigger,
 Membership now was a wondrous figure.
 One more ever—

Like the rats that ate Bishop Hatto they seem,
 They came in thousands in that agent's dream.
 One more ever—

They came in at the window and in at the door,
 From the right and the left—from behind and before.
 From within and without—from above and below
 And all at once to the agent they go!

* * *

THE AGENT WAKES

The agent sat in his office chair,
 His dream was over, and so was his scare,
 But his dream had helped him his problem to solve,
 And he set to work with a new resolve.
 The march of the workers, reflected he,
 Must be organised, and the workers should see
 That if, in this green and pleasant land,
 Jerusalem should be builded of man's hand,
 No rabble of rebels would reach the goal,
 The army must march as a banded whole;
 Line after line in serried array,
 The swinging ranks should march away!
 Though the goal was set on the far horizon,
 The way might be traversed, in unison.

The agent sat in his office chair
 And he saw at last what agents share:
 FAITH in the end for which we toil—
 HOPE sustained by the distant goal—
 In Labour's legions, an honoured post,
 Wherein to rally and lead the host—
 Captains in a grand array—
 Chosen men to smooth the way!
 Deep down in his heart our agent was stirred,
 So Hurrah for the Flag and the Cause that he served.

H. DRINKWATER.



THESE QUESTIONS STILL WORRY SOME READERS

Unsatisfactory Polling Booths

Question. Should there not be some uniform system of placing the actual polling booths? In one case a presiding officer — one of our opponents — placed these booths in contrary manner to the method adopted in other places. Our people are suspicious that this was not done without a purpose.

Answer. There is not much information to go upon here, but the point concerning the actual arrangements of a polling station and the facing of the compartments has recently been the subject of some discussion among election agents, in which the writer took part. The objection then discussed was that there was a row of compartments in one fixture so placed that the voters went behind it and it was quite possible for two voters or more to be out of the observation of the returning officer, and for intimidation or collusion to take place behind the structure.

On the other hand with this same type of compartment in use and the backs of the voters to the presiding officer it may be quite possible for the latter, his clerk or a personation agent, when standing, to get a clear view, or at any rate a pretty good indication of how the voter is marking his paper.

Our own opinion is that *compartments should be separate*, and only one person allowed to attend a compartment at a time. They are best made entirely open so that a full view of the person can be obtained, except that the desk portion should be screened on three sides. The voter should then be facing the presiding officer so that a full view of him can be obtained, except the act of marking the paper. This arrangement is unfortunately uncommon, and in the majority of places the spirit of the Act is infringed.

Rule 16 of the Ballot Act says, "each polling station shall be furnished with

such number of compartments in which voters can mark their votes screened from observation as the returning officer thinks fit, so that at least one compartment be provided for every one hundred and fifty electors . . ."

The inference is quite clear that the compartments are separate and so is the further instruction in Rule 25 which says "that the elector on receiving the ballot paper shall forthwith *proceed into* one of the compartments in the polling station." (The italics are ours.)

The implication here appears to be that the compartment will be almost like a telephone call box, and it will be something one goes *into* and not stands *at*. We should not object. Some presiding officers seem to assume that ballot papers must be marked under their observation, or at least so that they can see that it is being marked. There is no ground whatever for this presumption.

[Labour Organiser, June, 1931.]

Too Late to Vote

Question.—At the last election a number of our supporters presented themselves at the polling booth actually before the clock had ceased striking 9 p.m. They were turned away and perhaps you will tell us whether or no the officials were right in doing this?

Answer.—Our answer in this matter and on the facts stated is that the officials acted within the law and not even within their discretion, for of the latter they had none. The precise time for the close of the poll is the first stroke of the clock by Greenwich time, whether 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock. The supply of ballot papers must cease at that hour and no voters may be

admitted after that hour. No ballot papers may be given out after the hour, though it has been laid down that ballot papers that have been applied for and received by the voter may be accepted immediately after the hour.

In supplementing this answer we might add that votes in which ballot papers were supplied after the hour will be struck out on scrutiny. The poll must not be closed *earlier* than the statutory time, but once it is closed it cannot be reopened. We are afraid that unless it could be shown that sufficient people were deprived of votes by a too previous closing of the poll to materially affect *the result* of the election, no remedy lies for the fault of the presiding officer.

[*Labour Organiser*, March, 1926.]

A Teetotal Club as Committee Rooms

Question.—If a Labour Party has a club at which teas, tobacco and soft drinks are sold, can that club be used as a committee room during an election if the premises are closed as a club and used simply and solely as a committee room?

Answer.—On the facts stated we do not think the above rooms can be legitimately used as a committee room. The Corrupt Practices Acts apparently never contemplated the existence of a teetotal club, and the above premises could not be classed as a permanent political club within the meaning of the Section making the prohibition.

The Act reads:—

"Any premises where any intoxicating liquor is sold or is supplied to members of a Club, Society or Association, other than a permanent political club, or

"Any premises whereon refreshments of any kind, whether food or drink, is ordinarily sold for consumption on the premises . . . shall not be used as a Committee Room for the purpose of promoting or procuring the election of any candidate at an election . . ."

It will be seen from the above that if intoxicating liquor was sold, the club premises might be used as committee rooms, but no such exemption exists for a permanent political club which merely supplies refreshment. The situation is paradoxical, but such is the law.

It is, of course, possible to use some part of the premises if same has a separate entrance and no direct communication with any part of the premises on which the refreshment is sold or supplied. It might also be safe to use the premises if it could be shown that the supply of refreshments was so casual that it could legitimately be claimed that they were not "ordinarily sold." There is no legal definition of the term "ordinarily," but it could not be supposed to extend to the mere use of premises for an occasional tea party or social event.

[*Labour Organiser*, August, 1923.]

A Widow's Qualifications

Question. A man dies during the qualifying period and his widow continues living in the house up to and after June 1. Is she entitled to registration?

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Answer. This is a question which we note was set under the Labour Party Scheme for Study and Examination. We do not ordinarily answer these queries in the pages of the "Labour Organiser," but as the point is of some interest we will make an exception in our correspondent's favour.

The question itself leaves something to be presumed; we are to suppose that the occupier was the husband and not the wife—this latter point would make a considerable difference to the reply. The word "registration" of course covers both the Parliamentary and Local Government vote.

The husband's death makes no difference to the widow's Parliamentary qualification. The Parliamentary vote is based on residence (or the occupation of business premises). It appears in this case, the widow has resided during the whole of the qualifying period in the dwelling house in question and she is therefore entitled to a Parliamentary vote. Her qualification in this respect is entirely independent of her late husband.

In regard to the Local Government vote a wife's qualification is dependent on the husband's "occupation" as owner or tenant of land or premises and vice versa. If the husband or the wife dies the ground on which qualification rests disappears and the surviving partner is not entitled to be registered.

The above point has been clearly recognised on many occasions and an attempt was made to rectify the position while the Representation of the People Act, 1928, was going through Parliament. An amendment was in fact introduced by Mr. Rhys Davies, M.P. The amendment was, however, ruled out of order on the ground that it was an amendment of existing law and not an assimilation of the franchise within the preamble of the Bill.

In some districts an arrangement exists between the political Parties by which no objection is made to a widow's name remaining on the register provided she is still occupying the premises and would ordinarily herself become qualified by occupation in due course. An instance where an arrangement of the kind exists was given in the "Labour Organiser" for September, 1925.

[*Labour Organiser*, June, 1931.]

A Rural Problem

Question. Our Division is a very hard one to organise. In twenty miles of a truly rural part of the Division we have not got a single polling district committee, and every attempt to set them up has failed. Can you offer any suggestions as we feel this end of the Division is getting out of our hands. We can win the Division if the other part of it was fairly solid, but this agricultural country beats us. The places are so scattered. There are no really big villages and the means for getting about are very bad.

Answer. This problem is not a new one nor by any means confined to our correspondent's constituency. Our town ideas of organisation do not adapt themselves to countryside conditions, and the only places where they do seem to fit the circumstances is in those parts where intensive agriculture is the order of the day, and the number of land workers to the farm is relatively high. A big part of the country, however, is to-day in a condition where rural labour is sparse, and it is one of these places to which our friend refers, and which is so difficult to organise.

That in spite of the absence of structural organisation a considerable degree of support for Labour is latent in these parts has been evidenced again and again. It is a grave mistake to leave this support to languish until election times. Some contact, at any rate, can be kept in the summertime by flying corps of speakers to village greens, and by women's trips for the distribution of literature. But in our opinion a more effective way of holding the countryside is to be found. The names of supporters should be collected, and this is not an impossible task, for even in the case of the Party mentioned we know that they have records of supporters in practically every polling district. Some of these people can be induced to act as correspondents, and through them can be sent every month copies of the "Citizen" of which a thousand copies are to be obtained for 7s. 6d. This percolation of the rural areas is the finest method of reaching them that we know of. Rural minds are turned, not so much by unknown speakers and flying visits, as by the argument of the talker on the spot who has got a fact or two to bring home to them. One may never hear from a correspondent for months on

end, but one can depend that in most cases the correspondent is making good use of whatever literature reaches him, if it is only to pick out a single point or a single argument here or there. It is the telling argument or fact repeated from mouth to mouth that keeps the fire alight and rural hearts warm for Labour.

[Labour Organiser, June, 1931.]

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A LOCAL LABOUR PARTY'S REORGANISATION REPORT

An Example from Harrow

We have been extremely interested to read the report of a Committee on reorganisation, which was set up by the Harrow Local Labour Party in November last to enquire into and report upon the organisation of the Party and its Ward Committees, with a view to ascertaining weaknesses and to make recommendations for improved administration, "with a view to the more equitable distribution among membership of the necessary duties attendant upon the smooth running of the Party."

The setting up of such a Committee of examination seems to us to have

much to recommend it, and the Committee appears to have done its work thoroughly.

Our purpose in mentioning this matter is not to particularise the recommendations of the Committee, but to show our readers the value of the sort of thing which has been done.

The Committee has systematically examined the work of the officers and the Committees of the Party, the Wards, Women's Sections and Leagues of Youth, and it makes detailed recommendations affecting the work of each of the officers of the Party; the work of the Executive Committee, and it also reports upon matters, such as meetings, monthly circular, printed propaganda, the General Committee, etc. It is a long time since we saw such a thorough and intensive report.

The Secretary of the Harrow Local Labour Party is Mr. F. W. Donovan, 53, Westmorland Road, Harrow, Middlesex, and we trust our friend is in the position of being able to afford a copy of the report to any of our readers who sends along postage for same.

By the way, Harrow has recently started publication of a penny local monthly, entitled "The Labour News." We wish this four-page journal prosperity and long life.

Mr. A. Murray, late Middleton, Lancashire, has been appointed full-time agent for Whitechapel and St. George's Labour Party. New address next month.

The Plymouth Labour Party have commenced publication of the "Plymouth Labour News"—an eight-page journal which we trust will be a powerful aid to Labour's forces in Plymouth. We welcome this new-comer and wish it long life. It contains plenty of meat, and given sufficient attention to advertisement procuration the venture should prove a permanency and financial success.

In our June issue a slight error occurred on page 119 in which we stated that Labour representation on Durham County Council was as 88 to 29 others. As a matter of fact the up-to-date return shows Labour as 92 members to 25 of all others.

ELECTIONS

IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Retford's parliamentary history is well worth a passing allusion. Since 1885 the township has been merged in the county division of Bassetlaw. But for about five centuries East Retford had the right to send two members to Parliament, though from 1330 to 1571 the privilege was not exercised by the freemen, who wished to escape the obligation of supporting their burgesses. The franchise was restricted to "such freemen only as have a right to their freedom by birth, as eldest sons of freemen, or by serving seven years' apprenticeship, or have it by redemption, whether inhabiting or not inhabiting at the time of their being made free." It is not surprising, therefore, that East Retford was a corrupt borough, and the established custom in the eighteenth century was for those who voted for the two successful candidates to receive 40 guineas. The last election under the old system took place in 1826, when the result of the poll, after tumultuous scenes, which led to the military being summoned, was declared as follows:—

Mr. W. B. Wrightson ... 120

Sir Robt. Dundas ... 118

Sir H. W. Wilson ... 53

Sir Henry Wilson petitioned, and the Parliamentary Committee—for at that time election petitions were heard not by Petition Judges, as at present, but by a Parliamentary Committee appointed for the purpose—reported that the two successful candidates had been guilty of treating, and, therefore were not duly elected. Thereupon Mr. Tennyson introduced a Bill to disfranchise East Retford and transfer its two representatives to the town of Birmingham, which had no member, while Mr. Nicholson Calvert moved a counter-proposition that East Retford should retain its representation, and bribery and corruption be prevented in future by extending the franchise to the 40s. freeholders of the Hundred of Bassetlaw. This latter proposal was eventually carried by a majority of 18, and so, from 1828 to 1885, the enlarged constituency of East Retford continued to send its two members to Parliament.

The debates in both Houses of Parliament on the East Retford petition make amusing reading. It was stated in evidence, and not denied, that packets of money were left at the houses of voters at dead of night by unknown and mysterious messengers. Ninety-seven such packets were said to have been traced, and the friends of East Retford triumphantly pointed to the fact that even on the worst computation there was a large majority of pure over corrupt electors, whereas in other rotten boroughs, such as Shoreham, Cricklade, Aylesbury, and Grampound, which had been the subject of Disenfranchisement Bills, the majorities had been the other way. One of the chief witnesses had bolted from the town without paying his ale-house bills; another was proved to have made a will for a man in a lunatic asylum. Perhaps the most candid utterance on the subject was made by a member of the House of Lords, who put the matter thus:—

"Now, my lords, as to the amount of this corruption—suppose that those persons did receive twenty or forty guineas each, and that £3,000 or £4,000 was distributed among them, I say it is as a drop of water in the ocean, compared with the sums spent in elections. Mr. Evans himself tells us, that he spent £17,000 at Leicester; and it is pretty well known that at the last election for Northumberland £140,000 was spent, not in legal expenses only, but in treating and other illegal inducements to voting.

"At my own election in the county of Durham, I had to spend about £30,000; and a noble friend of mine, a noble marquis opposite, must have spent a great deal more. At the election for Yorkshire in 1826, although there was no contest, £100,000 was spent by the four candidates—a fact which was mentioned in the other House of Parliament by one of the members. In the election of 1806 for the same county, Lord Milton spent £100,000; another party £90,000; and the committee who acted for Mr. Wilberforce, £60,000; indeed, the expenses of even

an uncontested election for Yorkshire are so notorious, that there is at this moment the greatest difficulty to find members to represent it; and I believe that, except one of the present members, and a gentleman little known to the freeholders of the county, no other individuals have declared themselves candidates for the expensive honour of representing it. In fact, with the exception of Westminster, there is hardly a place in England where it is not necessary for a candidate who seriously intends to succeed, to spend a considerable sum of money. Whatever the theory of the representation may be, it has in practice come to this, that either directly or indirectly, covertly or openly, every man comes into Parliament by a breach of the law."

That, indeed, was the simple truth, and when the market price of a seat in the House of Commons was £1,800 a year, when the freehold of a borough like Gatton was actually bought for £180,000, and the practice of creating fictitious votes and qualifications on the day of election was notorious, there was no room for one party to throw stones at the other. The whole system was rotten to the core and cried aloud for reform.

Here is Gladstone's own account of the way he spent a day while conducting his canvass at Newark:—

"We started on canvass at 8 in the morning and worked at it for about 9 hours, with a great crowd, band and flags and innumerable glasses of beer and wine all jumbled together; then a dinner of 30 or 40 with speeches and songs until say 10 o'clock; then we always played a rubber of whist, and about 12 or 1 I got to bed but not to sleep, for never in my life did I undergo any excitement to be compared to it. My account of the day is faithful, except that I have omitted a public-house tour of speaking to the Red clubs, with which I often had to top up after the dinner and before the whist."

Mr. Gladstone was no worse for the experience and he came out handsomely at the top of the poll. A relic of that bygone election, which first gave him a seat in the House of Commons, is treasured at the Newark Museum. It is a faded silk banner bearing the words, "Gladstone and the Conservative Cause."

[From "Highways and Byeways in Nottinghamshire."]

STICK IT OUT

When your world's about to fall
And your back's against the wall,
When you're facing wild retreat and rout—

When it seems that nought can stop it,
All your pleas and plans can't stop it—
Get a grip upon yourself—and stick it out.

Any craven fool can quit,
But a man with pluck and grit
Will hold until the very final shout.
In the snarling teeth of sorrow
He will laugh and say: "To-morrow
The luck will change, I guess. Stick it out."

The luck does change. You know it.
All the records prove and show it,
And the men who win are men who
strangle doubt,
Who never hesitate nor swerve,
Who have grit and guts and nerve
And whose motto is: Play hard, and
stick it out!

So you, when things go wrong,
And you think you can't last long—
That you've got to quit, nor wait the
final bout,
Smile—smile at your beholders,
Clench your teeth and square your
shoulders—
And fight! You'll win if you will but
stick it out.

By E. LEAMY, in "The Land Worker"
for February, 1926.

The point made by "Investigator" in the "Labour Bulletin," reprinted on another page, seems to have been borne in mind by our friends at Wellingborough, who now publish a little monthly sheet known as "The Challenge," which is intended for general consumption, and who separately publish a little duplicated sheet for members only. The latter is entitled "News for Members," and it is both instructive and inspiring. Wellingborough, by the way, has made great progress in membership this year, and it is definitely out for a 2,000 total.

"The Challenge" is a revival on modest lines of a periodical of the same name which was published for some years in this Division.

KEEP WATCH ON THE OTHER SIDE

Too little importance is often attached to systematic observation of the tactics and activities of the Liberal and Tory organisations in the constituencies. It is not enough, however, that Labour should go on in its own sweet way making converts where it can, but taking no note of the work of its opponents, the extent to which such work succeeds, and any damage inflicted by it.

The tactics in political warfare often have a military analogy. What military commander could afford to ignore the activities of the enemy or dispense with the reports of his scouts and intelligence department?

It is quite true that the initiative should not be allowed to pass into the hands of one's opponents, and no Party should wait for the enemy to set the pace; but an observation of Liberal and Tory activities and the formulation of schemes to defeat them does not mean that the Local Party is to always act on the defensive. On the contrary a knowledge of the enemy's doings helps in planning attack, and the acts of our opponents themselves often enable us to deal them the shrewdest blows.

Every executive and every Labour agent and secretary should endeavour to be well informed concerning the enemy, and a general appreciation by the Party of what is expected of the members is a very useful thing. In between elections such knowledge is of importance, but during an election the matter becomes all-important. Yet quite recently we came across an occasion where the enemy had issued a slashing attack in a broad sheet published two or three days before the poll. No member of the Party thought of taking a copy to the committee rooms, and when knowledge of the issue was actually established no less than three workers "writing-up" at the committee rooms confessed to having received a copy and placing it behind the fire! Precious time was lost in securing a copy of the document which it was found necessary to reply to by a special leaflet.

An election agent is well advised to make special arrangements with his workers to ensure that his intelligence department never fails him. He requires copies of the enemy's literature immediately copies are procurable. He also requires copies of posters; information as to the sort of display made by them. This may necessitate several reports from different parts of the constituency in a County Division. If the enemy publishes a list of meetings such list is immediately required, and incidentally our opinion is that lists of meetings covering more than a week or even a week, do not pay the side which issues them. They constitute a disclosure of one's movements, and convey information as to the centres being played on, particularly when accompanied by the names of the speakers. Such information often enables the more mobile Party to counter indoor meetings with outdoor fixtures. Nor do premature lists of meetings help the attendances as it might be expected to do. In short, secrecy and surprise are as essential a part of electioneering tactics as they are of military tactics, and the agent who well advertises his meetings but gives no premature disclosure of where he is going to hold them scores over the other Party. For the same reason we never care about giving to the Press the names of speakers who are coming into the division until it becomes desirable to advertise them.

Information concerning the enemy's doorstep work is another matter of profound importance. We know of a case where all sides had completed their canvass, but one side decided on a lightning third canvass two or three days before the poll. It was mightily effective, but immediate information of the move would have enabled the agent to take better steps to counter it.

The stories told by Liberal and Tory canvassers should also be reported. Clear evidence is frequently to be obtained that the enemy canvassers have been prompted to say on the doorstep things which speakers dare not

utter on the platform. And these tactics are insidious and successful unless steps are early taken to counter them.

It is just as important to know what is being said by speakers at meetings, and those who attend enemy meetings will render greater service by taking accurate note of what is said than by disorder and interruptions.

In a Borough Division the election agent is generally soon aware of the opening of enemy committee rooms, but in a County Division knowledge of where the enemy have opened rooms and of the date they are open often discloses evidence of their strength and intentions, particularly if the personnel manning the rooms is known.

This question of personnel is also important. The knowledge of what prominent people are coming forward in support, or of what prominent people are sulking in their tent is often useful. It affords sometimes the opportunity of driving a wedge into the enemy ranks.

Though election petitions are not particularly popular, it can be said with truth that vast sums have been paid by political parties in the past to collect information *after* an election, which with a wide-awake intelligent department might have been collected far more easily *during* an election. Whether one is able to lodge a petition or no the illegal acts of the enemy should be carefully noted, dated and recorded. Some of them call for immediate action by the election agent. As for instance the engagement of a prohibited committee room; the use of a prohibited vehicle on polling day; intimidation or improper conduct at the polling station; allegations of bribery or treating; alleged illegal employment or the issue of illegal literature, etc., etc. In none of these matters is a moment's delay permissible in conveying information to the agent, yet one can always discover the man after the election who can narrate stories of illegal acts which he alleges the enemy have indulged in, but which he has failed to report in time to the proper quarter.

Though our remarks so far, have been principally directed to observation and report of enemy activities at election times, it is no less necessary to possess a live intelligence department all the year round.

One of our opponents, for instance, may decide on a general house-to-

house distribution of literature. This is a matter that should not only be reported, but discussed by the executive, for it calls for immediate efforts in the same direction. A summer campaign or a series of meetings by the enemy are also matters of importance to be reported, discussed and countered. The enemy may engage in a canvass. That is of importance to the Party. The Tory or Liberal member or candidate may be announced at a garden parties, at At Homes; a big bazaar may be announced, or even a series of cottage meetings. The Party which does not know these things and realise the possibilities of such activities attracting support which our own Party ought to get, is indeed blind to its own interests.

Certain constituencies are flattered from time to time by the visit of front rank speakers from the other side. Some constituencies are often mere platforms for speeches intended for wider consumption. Report of such enemy activities is not merely on for the local executive, but a report should be made to Party headquarters. National campaigns are planned with the activities of the enemy well in mind.

From what we have said it should be clear to all that far more attention should be paid in future to the doings of the enemy, and in each constituency some attempt should be made to inform workers of what is expected of them from time to time in this respect.

[Labour Organiser, June, 1931.]

Questions Answered Here

The Editor invites readers to send in queries of general interest on organisational and technical matters. Queries for which a reply is desired the same month, should reach us by 6th of the month.

DON'T FORGET THE BACKWOODSMEN

Visiting a constituency the other day with which we had at one time a passing connection during a bye-election, we made some enquiries concerning several doughty workers who assisted us at the time. To our surprise we found several of these persons were not members of the Party. They had never even joined the Party, though at two or three successive elections they had come along and rendered excellent help.

Though the facts on this occasion came as rather a shock to us, we have long had a regard for the existence of backwoodsmen in other places, using that term not in a derisive sense but because it is an expressive one. There is a certain psychology which simply cannot support a sustained interest in politics.

Now are these people worthy of that contempt which the year in and year out enthusiast is ready to bestow upon them? The backwoodsmen have votes, they are citizens; they are products of an educational system and of a civilisation yellowed by the gutter press. But we want them, and if we can only get them at an election once in three years, they are still worth having and recording and keeping in touch with.

Our own experience is that lots of these people possess tremendous vigour when an election comes along. They seem born to the work and if their enthusiasm does not last it is at any rate all devouring while it is on them, and their influence is sometimes tremendous.

Now our point in mentioning this matter is that after a few endeavours to get these people to meetings or to make them members, they are often permitted to lapse out of sight altogether, and though they report to the Party after an election has begun a part at least of their value has been lost. We believe it is a good thing to keep lists of workers from election to election, and at every election to compare the present Party strength in this direction with the last election, or even the one before that. In this way the backwoodsmen who are not on current Party lists can be discovered, mobilised and trotted out to time.

[*Labour Organiser*, April, 1926.]

AND DON'T QUARREL WITH OFFICIALS

Our mail, at recurring intervals, bears evidence of friction between local Labour workers and officials with whom they are brought into contact at election times, and sometimes through the normal work of the Party. One may dismiss as improbable the likelihood of Labour men being particularly prone to quarrel with the officials, many of whom are collectivists from experience and principle, and the cases we have examined seem to point to the existence of a supercilious minority among public employees who affect to despise the upstart Labour Party.

One may concede that the overwhelming number of permanent public officials try to and do accord civility and urbanity in the exercise of their office, and extend help and guidance to our workers to the utmost extent compatible with impartiality (though this is *not true* of the horde of guinea hunting hangers-on who are brought in from outside as presiding officers at elections in many areas). But the green and unexperienced worker whose misfortune is to come up against the other kind is at a great disadvantage. We have known many attempts at bluff, and several cases of over-stepped authority and bad law. As instance, we ourselves once had an officer to deal with who threatened to refuse admission to the counting agents because their declarations of secrecy did not carry at the foot section 4 of the Ballot Act. The young man had relied on an erroneous line in Parker's (which so far as reprints of statutes are concerned is no more an authority than these pages). Only the production of the Act itself saved the situation.

The soundest advice for such situations is to be courteous, and gather knowledge beforehand. All too many of our young workers venture into situations and responsibilities without sufficient previous knowledge. On legal points workers should always consult either the Head Office or the District Organiser. To be too proud to acknowledge ignorance is to place a foolish barrier to knowledge—and it may lead to a far worse fate than meeting the superior smile of a jack-in-office who knows but won't tell.

[*Labour Organiser*, July, 1926.]